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The Antecedents of Union Commitment and Participation: Evaluating Moderation Effects across Unions*

Tom Redman and Ed Snape

Abstract

This paper evaluates whether nature of the union moderates the antecedents of union commitment and participation, based on a study of member attitudes in Voice, formerly the Professional Association of Teachers, and the National Unions of Teachers, often seen as the most “moderate and “militant” teacher unions respectively.

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THE ANTECEDENTS OF UNION COMMITMENT AND PARTICIPATION: EVALUATING MODERATION EFFECTS ACROSS UNIONS

Introduction

There is longstanding and well established body of research on members' union commitment and their participation in union activities (Gordon, Philpot, Burt, Thompson, and Spiller, 1980; Snape, Redman, & Chan, 2000; Fiorito, Padavic, and DeOrentiis, 2014). A meta-analysis identified members' union instrumentality, pro-union attitudes, organizational commitment and job satisfaction as antecedents of union commitment, which was then associated with members' participation in union activities (Bamberger, Kluger, and Suchard, 1999)¹. In discussing future research needs, Bamberger, Kluger and Suchard argued that: "...researchers should begin to focus their attention on how multivariate union commitment models may vary with the nature and composition of the workforce examined..." (1999: 315). The argument is that the importance of the factors associated with union commitment and participation is likely to vary according to the relative salience of instrumentality and ideological needs. For example, it has traditionally been suggested that white-collar workers are less likely to attach to a union on the basis of ideology or general pro-union attitudes, with instrumentality considerations looming larger than in the case of blue-collar workers (Strauss, 1964; Roberts, Loveridge and Gennard, 1972; Tapia, 2013).

In this paper, we address the need for more work on the boundary conditions of union commitment and participation models by evaluating the suggestion that the nature of the union and the characteristics of its membership influences the relative

¹ The meta-analysis drew on 59 studies with 80 independent samples conducted from 1980. The majority of studies were based on North American samples but the analysis also included a sizeable number of Asian, European and Australian studies.

importance of the various antecedents of union commitment and participation. We compare member attitudes in two unions: Voice, formerly the Professional Association of Teachers (PAT), and the National Unions of Teachers (NUT). These are often seen as the most “moderate” and “militant” teacher unions respectively. First, we aim to establish the extent to which these union “images” (Craft and Abboushi, 1993) or “brands” (Riley, 1995) are reflected in the pattern of member attitudes and union participation. Both unions recruit teachers, but they make very different appeals in recruiting members, and we aim to see whether or not this results in different membership profiles. Second, and our main contribution, we evaluate whether or not the antecedent processes of union commitment and participation differ across the two unions. There is already US research suggesting that union image, measured as unions being strong (e.g. achieving good terms and conditions for their members), adequately representing women, not corrupt, etc., may predict voting intentions in union representation elections (Youngblood, DeNisa, Molleston, and Mobley, 1984). We evaluate whether there are differences in the importance of the antecedents of union commitment and participation between our two unions. In this, we are responding to Bamberger, Kluger, and Suchard’s (1999) call for more research on moderation effects in union commitment models.

Union Commitment and Participation

Based on their meta-analysis, Bamberger, Kluger, and Suchard (1999) proposed and found support for an “integrative” model of union commitment and participation. According to this model, the impact of job satisfaction on union commitment is partially mediated by organizational commitment and that of union

instrumentality by pro-union attitudes. Finally, union commitment has a direct effect on union participation.

Union instrumentality refers to the perceived impact of the union on valued outcomes, such as pay and employment conditions (Fullagar and Barling 1989). Pro-union attitudes is defined as the perceived desirability of unions in general (McShane 1986), rather than attitudes towards the individual's own union in particular.

Bamberger et al. (1999) find that pro-union attitudes has a larger direct effect on union commitment than does union instrumentality, arguing that unions should pay more attention to social exchange aspects of the member-union relationship, since pro-union attitudes reflect perceived mutual support and solidarity, in contrast to the purely instrumentally-based economic exchange perspective. This implies that unions should adopt a campaigning approach, emphasizing rank-and-file involvement and building pro-union attitudes, rather than relying solely on appeals to narrow instrumentality, as in the traditional US "business union" model (Tapia, 2013).

Bamberger et al. (1999) found evidence of dual commitment to union and employer, in that there was a positive relationship between organizational and union commitment. Bamberger et al (1999) also found a positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and a negative relationship between job satisfaction and union commitment. However, findings on the latter relationship have generally been mixed, for example, a number of studies report no significant relationships between job satisfaction and union commitment (Tan and Aryee, 2002; Chan et al, 2006). Gordon et al. (1980) found either negative or non-significant associations between satisfaction of lower and higher order needs and three dimensions of union commitment. Some studies (e.g. Deery et al, 1994; Magneau et al, 1998) find that job satisfaction is positively related to union commitment, whilst

others report a negative relationship (Fullagar and Barling, 1989; Barling, Wade and Fullagar, 1990). Fuller and Hester (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of 22 samples of mainly North American studies conducted between 1980 and 1996. They found that correlations between union commitment and job satisfaction ranged between -0.32 to +.36. The relationship between union commitment and organizational commitment also varies considerably in the reported literature. For example Reed et al's (1994) meta-analysis of 19 samples (16 from the USA and Canada) found correlations ranged from -0.25 to +0.77. Fuller and Hester's analysis found a very similar range, from -.026 to +0.72. These wide ranges arguably reflect the differences in industrial relations context and climates in the studies.

Bamberger et al. (1999: 315) propose that the nature of the membership (e.g. occupation type such as blue-collar, white-collar, and professional) may moderate relationships in union commitment models. For example, unionization is only one of a number of strategies that professional workers may draw on in advancing their interests, and this may influence the relative importance of pro-union attitudes and instrumentality for such workers.

In this paper, we test these propositions by comparing the antecedents of union commitment and participation amongst the members of two teaching unions, Voice and NUT. Voice is a relatively moderate union emphasizing "professionalism", whilst the NUT is a more traditional and ostensibly "unionate" organization (Prandy, Stewart and Blackburn, 1983; Carter, 2004; Carter and Stephenson, 2012), emphasizing vigorous representation of members' interests, and not necessarily eschewing militant action. Whilst the occupation and industrial relations context is common for both unions, they are nevertheless attempting to present very different images to members, potential members and others. Our primary research question is

whether these organizational orientations are reflected in members' attitudes and in the antecedent processes of commitment and participation in the two unions.

Our model is based on the Bamberger et al. (1999) "integrative" model, as described above, although we differ in that we conceptualize members' participation in their union as a form of union citizenship behavior (UCB) (see figure 1). This is consistent with recent developments in the union literature (e.g., Fullagar, McLean Parks, Clark, and Gallagher, 1995; Skarlicki and Latham, 1996; Tan and Aryee, 2002; Deery, Iverson, Buttigieg and Zatzick 2014). Skarlicki and Latham define UCB as "...things that members do that are not required but provide a benefit to the union or its members" (1996:163), essentially extra-role behaviors targeted at the union and fellow members. There has been considerable debate about the dimensionality and nature of union participation (see Redman and Snape, 2004 for a review), and researchers have reported varying numbers of sub-dimensions (McShane, 1986; Kelly and Kelly, 1994; Kuruvilla, 1990). We prefer the UCB concept to the more traditional union participation conceptualizations because of its tighter definition, clearer measurement and more consistent sub-dimensions.

We also differ from Bamberger et al. (1999) in testing an additional alternative version of the model, in which we replace organizational commitment with professional commitment (see Figure 2). As with organizational commitment, we propose that professional commitment is a potential antecedent of union commitment, and that satisfaction with the job may be an antecedent of professional commitment.

There are longstanding debates about the potential significance of professional commitment as an antecedent of union orientations. One strand of research suggests that committed professionals make uneasy union members, as the competing roles of professional and union member pull in opposite directions, resulting in feelings of

tension akin to a “split personality” Corwin (1970: 44). Consistent with this, Black (1983) reports that teachers with higher professional commitment are less likely to engage in teacher militancy. However, Shedd and Bacharach have argued that the distinction between union and professional issues for teachers is artificial, and that there is an implicit anti-union undertone to much of the debate, with “professionalism” being a veil for “cooperation” and “servility” (1991: 180-181).

Whatever, the merits of these views, during the 1960s and 1970s teachers in many countries (Moore, 1978), turned increasingly to unions (Jessup, 1978), and to militant union action (Margerison and Elliot, 1970; Cox, 1980; Deem, 1974; Fox and Wince, 1976). Explanations for this growing militancy have centred on the changing social origins of the teaching workforce, the growth in school size and the associated bureaucratisation, increased feelings of powerlessness in educational decision making, and reduced job influence (Bacharach, Bamberger and Conley, 1990; Cole, 1968; Fox and Wince, 1976). However, there has been little formal testing of the association between professional commitment and union outcomes. What few studies there are have provided mixed findings, with studies reporting both negative and positive correlations between teachers’ professional commitment and union outcomes such as militancy (Kadyschuk, 1997).

Union Membership in Teaching

There are four main teachers’ unions in England. Three are affiliated to the Trade Union Congress (TUC): the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), and the NUT. There is also a non-TUC union, Voice. The NUT is the largest, and has been the most militant (Seifert, 1987). In this paper, our concern is with Voice and the NUT.

To some extent, as we discuss below, each union has cultivated a distinctive image as part of recruitment competition. Union image has been seen as an important factor in an individual's decision on which union to join (Beaumont and Elliot, 1989; Craft and Abboushi, 1983). Teachers choose a union early in their careers, and the choice may reflect their preference for either a militant or moderate union (Healy, 1997). Survey evidence from new qualified teachers (NQTs) suggests that their factual knowledge of individual differences between teacher unions is rather limited and that the decision on which union to join is very much influenced by the union images portrayed (Riley, 1996; Labour Research Department, 2005). For example the Labour Research Department (2005) survey found many NQTs were unaware of differences between the teacher unions on key policy areas impacting on their jobs, such as workforce remodelling, but that overall impression and image issues, such as being impressed with the recruitment message, were highly influential in their joining decisions.

There has been considerable pressure for further union mergers in teaching and the goal of one union for all teachers in England has been widely debated in the teaching unions. Explanations for the lack of progress on mergers tend to centre on historical differences in policy objectives and the resistance of General Secretaries and Executive Committees to terminate their union's existence. However, one key underlying reason why union mergers in teaching have not been successful is argued that the unions have different images, which may be difficult to reconcile (Riley, 1996) and that these images reflect deeper underlying differences in traditional "union identities" (Hyman, 1994). The two unions with perhaps the most well defined and distinct images are Voice and NUT. We now discuss each in turn.

Voice

Voice describes itself as an independent trade union and professional association for education professionals. It was founded in 1970, in the same year that the NUT first affiliated to the TUC, by two Essex based teachers during a period of increased industrial action by teachers. The guiding principle in the formation of the union was a pledge to uphold professional standards in teaching and in particular, not to take strike action (Bryant and Leicester, 1991). The unions motto is “children first” and the no strike pledge is enshrined in the “Cardinal Rule”, rule 4 of its constitution, which states: “Members shall not go on strike in any circumstances” The union has a “Code of Professional Action” to guide member behaviour in disputes. The code emphasises resolving disputes by negotiation and lobbying, with the strongest form of action, and one that is rarely taken, being to demonstrate outside of working hours. The Voice (2013) website notes that at the union “We prefer the force of argument rather than the argument of force. At Voice, we believe in the power of negotiation to protect the interests of our members – who never resort to strikes or other forms of industrial action.”

Voice has a devolved, regional structure and recruits college lecturers in addition to teachers. Until the name change in 2008, to Voice, the union had two specialist sections, the Professional Association of Nursery Nurses (PANN), recruiting nursery nurses, nannies and other child carers, and the Professions Allied to Teaching section (PAAtT), recruiting school support staff, such as secretaries and administrators, librarians, technical staff, and classroom assistants. In large part the decision to change the name was image related. For example, across the various sections the union had eight different logos and three names (PAT, PANN, and PAAtT) and there was concern that this caused confusion for potential new members. The choice of name was also aimed at reinforcing what the union stood for, that is

reflecting its core value of looking after members' interest by negotiation rather than going on strike. The union had around 35,000 members in 2005 – the time of our study 2005-2006, and approximately evenly split between teachers and the other two sections. Voice's teacher membership tends to be older than the other teaching unions and one, according to Riley (1995), whose political convictions are akin to those of the Conservative Party.

The National Union of Teachers

The NUT is the oldest and largest teachers' union in England and Wales. The NUT was founded in 1870 as the National Union of Elementary Teachers, changing its name to the National Union of Teachers in 1889. For the last quarter of the nineteenth century the union had more male members than female, but in the twentieth century the position was reversed with women coming to form the majority of the membership, and this has been so ever since. In 2005, the NUT had some 240,000 members of which 76 percent were female.

Amongst teacher unions, the NUT has traditionally taken the most adversarial stance on general educational and employment issues. Recent examples of the former include the union's opposition to Trust and Academy Schools and of the latter its protracted resistance to performance related pay (threshold payments) for teachers and long standing workload campaigns. The NUT has a relatively strong and longstanding left-wing bloc of activists and has the most militant orientation of the teaching unions (Seifert, 1984). Despite militant teacher unionism suffering badly under Thatcher in the 1980s, resulting in the loss of national pay bargaining rights, there had been a recent resurgence of the left in the NUT, and the Deputy General Secretary elections in 2005 were won by a left-wing candidate.

The more militant orientation of the NUT is reflected in its unionate recruitment campaigns and newly qualified teachers (NQT) views of the union. For example, in the series of “Ten Good Reasons to be in the NUT” pamphlets summarising its recruitment message potential members are told of the unions current priorities in a language that notes it is “demanding”, “standing up”, “fighting” etc. For example, from the 2006 pamphlet “The NUT is demanding a proper national contract that protects teachers and improves their conditions of service” (NUT, 2006). Riley’s (1995) interviews of NQT’s reported their perception of the NUT as the union with the most distinct image, and as a traditional supporter of the Labour Movement, a staunch defender of teachers’ rights, and with a fundamentally left-wing, political and collectivist culture. The LRD (2004) survey of 1,500 NQTs found that perceptions of militancy were important in union joining decisions, and that the NUT was perceived as the most militant teacher union.

Method

In this section we first, describe the study context by examining some of the major government reforms impacting on teachers working lives at the time of our study. Second, we discuss the research procedures adopted for our cross-sectional study and the nature of samples collected. Third, we report on the measures used in the surveys to test the Bamberger et al (1999) model.

Study context

Government reforms of educational policy are rarely popular with the teaching workforce. School reform in England over the past two decades has been subjected to “more intensive and sustained central government intervention” than any other country (Day and Smethem, 2009: 141). This was especially true in the period of our

research fieldwork. "Education, education, education" was how Tony Blair set out his priorities for the incoming government as Labour put schools at the top of the political agenda. Schools and teachers benefited in terms of increased real spending per pupil under Labour in this period (IFS, 2011) but the government's educational policy reforms also sought to promote a "new professionalism" amongst teachers" with more mixed impacts on teachers working lives. A key reform was "workforce remodelling" with an avowed aim of reducing the pressures and stresses of school teaching. A central feature of this policy was to relieve pressure on the teaching labour force by increasing the use of teaching support staff to perform a range of activities previously restricted to qualified teachers. Teaching unions were sceptical about the impacts of this restructuring and concerned about the de-professionalization of teaching through a process of de-skilling and work intensification (Stevenson, 2007; Day and Smethem, 2009). There is some qualitative empirical evidence that such reforms undermined teacher identity and professional commitment to teaching (Day, Elliot and Kingston, 2005) and intensified rather than reduced the work pressures in teaching (Carter and Stevenson, 2012).

Samples and procedure

Voice sample. A self-completion questionnaire was mailed to a random sample of 3,500 members of Voice (at the time of the study PAT)² in England. Completed questionnaires were mailed to members' home addresses and returned by individual respondents directly to the university in sealed reply-paid envelopes. We received 1,256 completed responses, providing a response rate of 36 percent. For the

² The fieldwork predates the name change from PAT to Voice but for presentational reasons we use the current name throughout.

purposes of this paper, we focused on main scale teachers only, excluding Heads (n=19), Deputy Heads (n=82), and senior teachers/others (n=2), and we also excluded a small number of respondents who were also members of other unions as well as Voice (n=6). Along with a small number of cases with missing values on the study variables, this produced a sample of 1086 cases for analysis. The mean age of this sample was 49.41 years, with an average of 22.67 years working in teaching and 13.93 years of Voice membership. Over ninety percent were female, 81 percent were married or living as married, 30 percent worked part-time, 3 percent were supply teachers and almost 8 percent were on fixed-term contracts. Because of changes to the membership database management it proved impossible to fully assess the representative nature of the respondents, for example on age and tenure in the union. However, we could assess the representative nature of the sample on gender which suggested that our sample was fairly representative of the overall union, which was made of 90 percent female members. Discussion with the senior union officers suggested that our sample was also broadly representative of the age profile of members.

NUT sample. As part of a wider study of NUT members, a questionnaire was mailed to the home address of 1,174 members, the complete membership of two territorial divisions of the union. Questionnaires were again returned directly to the university in sealed reply-paid envelopes. We received 420 responses, for a response rate of 36 percent. Again, we focussed on main scale teachers only, excluding Heads (n=2) and Deputy Heads (n=15). After deleting cases with missing values, this provided a sample of 386 cases. The mean age of this sample was 43.34, with an average of 17.20 years in teaching and 15.67 years union membership. Seventy-three percent were female, 80 percent were married or living as married, 11 percent worked

part-time, 2 percent were supply teachers and 4 percent were on fixed-term contracts. Whilst the union could not provide us with an exact and detailed breakdown of the demographic characteristics of members, the available figures show that nationally 75.8 percent of members were female, broadly consistent with our sample, and union leaders assured us that our sample was broadly representative of the membership of the two divisions surveyed.

Measurement

The constructs were measured as follows. Unless otherwise mentioned, responses were on a seven-point scale, from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). *Job satisfaction* was measured with three items from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Spector, 1997), for example: “All in all, I am satisfied with my job”. *Organizational commitment* focused on commitment to the school in which the teacher was employed, with four items reflecting Meyer and Allen’s (1997) affective dimension, for example: “I really feel as if my school’s problems are my own”. *Professional commitment* was measured with four items, based on Meyer, Allen and Smith’s (1993) measure of affective occupational commitment, for example: “I am proud to be in the teaching profession”.

Union commitment also involved four items, again reflected an affective commitment, and paralleled those for organizational commitment from Meyer and Allen (1997)... For example: “I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to the union” (reverse scored). *Union instrumentality* was measured using Sverke and Kuruvilla’s (1995) “instrumental rationality-based commitment”, which reflects a self-interested commitment, based on the satisfaction of salient personal goals. The measure included eight items, each formed by taking square root of the product of an item such

as “The union’s chances of improving my pay are great” and a corresponding item such as “To get higher pay is...” (The latter was answered on a 7 point scale anchored from 1 (*very unimportant to me*) to 7 (*very important to me*). We added one pair of items to this scale, referring to the provision of membership benefits by the union. *General pro-union attitudes* refers to attitudes towards unions in general (McShane 1986), and was measured with six items, for example: “Unions are a positive force in this country”.

Union citizenship behaviour (UCB) was based on a scale adapted from Snape and Redman (2004) and reflects members’ extra-role behaviours, and was measured as a response to the question: “Think about how you behave in relation to the union and your work colleagues. How often do you do each of the following?” We used ten items and responses were made on a five-point scale, “not at all” (1) to “at every available opportunity” (5). Exploratory factor analyses of the ten items in each of both the Voice and NUT samples suggested an interpretable three-factor solution. “*Activist UCB*” was measured with four items concerned with attending union meetings, helping with union campaigns or elections, volunteering to be a union official, committee member or delegate, and attending a union rally or demonstration. “*Rank & file UCB*” was measured with three items: reading union literature, voting in union elections, and speaking well of the union. Finally, three items measured “*individual-oriented UCB*”, including advising work colleagues on union-related matters and grievances, and helping them put their case to management.

Analysis Strategy

In this paper, our analysis is based primarily on respondents’ answers on our structured scales. All survey respondents were also asked to provide any additional

comments they wished to make at the end of the questionnaires. We also draw to some extent on our analysis of these written comments.

In our quantitative data analysis, we began by assessing the extent to which our measurement of constructs can be considered valid, using a confirmatory factor analysis to assess the measurement model. Next, we compared the attitudes of the membership of the two unions using t-tests and some qualitative analysis of open-ended responses from the questionnaire. Finally, we analyzed the antecedents of union commitment and UCB, by estimating the relationships represented in figures 1 and 2, the so-called structural models.

Results

Measurement model

To evaluate the extent to which our questionnaire items were measuring distinct constructs, using the statistical package AMOS, we estimated a confirmatory factor analysis or measurement model with each construct measured by the individual questionnaire items (for an introduction to AMOS and an explanation of confirmatory factor analysis and measurement models, see Byrne, 2010). This nine-factor measurement model (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, professional commitment, union commitment, union instrumentality, pro-union beliefs, and three dimensions of UCB) provided a reasonable fit for the Voice sample ($\chi^2 = 2510.993$; $df = 666$; $CFI = 0.914$; $RMSEA = 0.051$). All indicators loaded significantly ($p < 0.001$) on their latent variables. A single-factor model provided a poor fit ($\chi^2 = 14175.053$; $df = 702$; $CFI = 0.372$; $RMSEA = 0.133$), with a significant deterioration in chi-square relative to the hypothesized model (change in $\chi^2 = 11664.060$; change in $df = 36$; $p < 0.01$). A reasonable fit was also found for the NUT sample ($\chi^2 =$

1378.946; $df = 666$; $CFI = 0.911$; $RMSEA = 0.053$), with all indicators loading significantly ($p < 0.001$) on their latent variables. Again, a single-factor model provided a poor fit ($\chi^2 = 5860.596$; $df = 702$; $CFI = 0.360$; $RMSEA = 0.138$), with a significant deterioration in chi-square relative to the hypothesized model (change in $\chi^2 = 4481.650$; change in $df = 36$; $p < 0.01$). This suggests that our hypothesized nine-factor model fit the data well, whilst the alternative single-factor model provided a very poor fit in both samples. In other words, our questionnaire items appear to provide valid measurement of these constructs.

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations, and reliabilities for the study variables. All the multi-item scales had alphas greater than .7 with the exception of UCB activist in the NUT sample (.66), and the UCB rank and file (.69) in the Voice sample which were only marginally below. This suggests that our constructs were measured reliably.

Comparison of attitudes and UCB

We used an independent samples t-test to compare the means values of each of our two samples on the study variables. The results are indicated in table 1, which shows means for each sample and indicates whether these are significantly different between the two unions. The results show that whilst union commitment and perceived union instrumentality were not significantly different between the Voice and NUT members, Voice members had a significantly higher mean job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and professional commitment, whilst NUT members were higher in all three dimensions of UCB and in general pro-union attitudes. These findings were essentially unchanged when we controlled for gender, age, job level, school type, and part-time, supply and temporary contract status. This accords to

some extent with the relative images of the two unions: it appears that Voice members were more satisfied with their jobs and more highly committed to their employer (i.e. their school) and to their profession (teaching), whilst NUT members were more pro-union in general and more prone to participate actively in their union, although not necessarily having higher commitment or perceived instrumentality for their union.

‘Table 1 here’

Our further analysis of survey respondents’ open-ended written comments suggests that, for Voice members, legal protection was essential in an increasingly litigious climate, and this was the key reason, and only reason in many cases, for joining a union. Voice was then their union of choice because of its no strike clause.

For example:

“My main reason for belonging to any union is in case any child in my care has an accident, when I would call on it to support me. My reason for belonging to [Voice] is their no strike clause and children first philosophy.”

“I chose [Voice] because it is a non-striking union. I agree with unions in principal – much good is achieved generally. However, as a professional teacher I don’t agree with strike action that disrupts pupils’ education.”

“I joined [Voice] because it offered the benefits of legal back up and it allowed me not to take industrial action. Cynical but true.”

“I am a geography teacher and often take children on field trips. I belong to a union because of the legal protection in case of accidents etc. I belong to [Voice] because of its no-strike clause.”

“I belong to [Voice] only because I need to belong to a union for insurance protection. I belong to [Voice] because it is the only one I can join that won’t ask me to strike.”

In sharp contrast to the Voice responses, no NUT members mentioned legal protection as their reason for choosing the NUT. Respondents’ comments in the NUT surveys reflected a different set of issues, particularly work intensification and

increased state regulation of teachers work in line with findings from recent qualitative research in the NUT (Edwards, 2009; Carter, 2004). The most frequent issue raised was that the union should be doing more to deal with key concerns of workload, work-life balance, and working conditions. Some Voice members also noted these concerns, but they did not link them to criticisms of the union; rather they blamed the government for the problems of the teaching profession. Many NUT members felt that their union should be more active in bringing about the necessary reforms to improve their wellbeing at work. For example, the following comments were provided by NUT members:

“To me the union misses the point. I feel many teachers are not so concerned about their pay as the ridiculous conditions and hours they work under. The union should do more about these issues.”

“The union needs to ignore Government more and stick up for the teachers more. It would then get more respect in my school.”

“The biggest let down on the part of the union is the failure to prevent Baker³ days; the failure to prevent a seriously awful national curriculum; and the failure to prevent the threshold nonsense. Apart from this it’s doing ok”

“The profession is on the verge of collapse as result of serious exploitation of teachers. We are too stressed, over-worked, and under-valued and constantly under pressure to achieve. The union should do more to support us in issues where it really matters.”

Interestingly, a small number of Voice members said that they were considering switching to the NUT, not because of any conviction that this was the right thing to do, but because of friction with other NUT teachers in their schools. Their concern was

³ Baker days are in-service training days which were introduced by the Conservative education secretary Kenneth Baker (hence Baker days) so that head teachers could bring all their staff together for training purposes and resulted in five days being removed from teachers’ holidays.

that they were made to feel like free-riders on the more militant actions of NUT members. As two Voice members put it:

“My biggest area of concern at the moment is the relationship in my school with NUT members. They feel that they earn the benefits for teachers by threatening strike action and the like, and PAT members freeload on their efforts. It makes my life in the school very uncomfortable.”

“What makes me think of changing my union is not any sense of dissatisfaction with it, but it is because I feel very unfairly treated by NUT members in my school who constantly goad me about sponging off their efforts.”

A NUT member also noted that:

“A large number of NQTs are joining [Voice]. They are seen as the “quiet union”, more like a professional association really, that will give them protection without having to get involved. But we make sure their life is not so quiet here. We remind them who is fighting for their terms and conditions – and it’s not [Voice].”

We now turn to our analysis of the antecedents of union commitment and UCB in the two unions, and in particular to the question of whether or not the nature of the union moderates the antecedent processes.

Structural models

We estimated two structural models, as shown in figures 1 and 2, one including organizational commitment and the other including professional commitment. We estimated these models using the AMOS statistical package, which enables the estimation of models such as those shown in our figures. The parameters shown in figures 1 and 2 are the path coefficients. These are standardized regression weights, representing the relationships between the hypothesized antecedent variables and union commitment/ participation, as shown in the model diagram. (For an introductory explanation of structural equation modeling see Byrne, 2010).

Each of the constructs in the models was measured by the individual questionnaire items, apart from union citizenship behaviour, where for the sake of parsimony the three UCB dimensions referred to above were used as indicators of a single UCB construct. We estimated two-group models, with Voice and NUT members respectively forming the two groups. First, this was estimated as an unconstrained model, with all paths free to vary across the two groups. Second, we estimated a constrained model, with the path coefficients constrained to be equal across the two groups. To test the hypothesis that the structural relationships differed between the Voice and NUT samples, we compared the fit of the constrained and unconstrained models.

‘Figures 1 and 2 here’

For the organizational commitment analysis, the unconstrained model provided quite a good fit ($\chi^2 = 2468.003$; $df = 684$; $CFI = 0.917$; $RMSEA = 0.042$, which was superior to that provided by the constrained model (change in $\chi^2 = 20.432$; change in $df = 8$; $p < 0.01$). Since the better fit is provided by the unconstrained model, which allows the path coefficients to vary across the two samples, these findings suggests that there are significant differences in these paths between the Voice and NUT groups.

The path coefficients for the unconstrained model are shown in figure 1. For both Voice and NUT members, job satisfaction positively predicted organizational commitment, but neither was significantly associated with union commitment. Union instrumentality predicted union commitment directly, and also pro-union attitudes, through which there was an additional indirect positive effect on union commitment. Finally, union commitment positively predicted UCB.

We explored the differences between the Voice and NUT findings further by reviewing the critical ratios for differences in paths between the two groups. Just two of the path coefficients were significantly different between the Voice and NUT groups: that from pro-union beliefs to union commitment and that from union commitment to UCB. In each case, the path was significantly larger for the NUT sample. These findings suggest that pro-union beliefs were more salient amongst NUT members in motivating union commitment and UCB, and that union commitment was more likely to translate into active participation amongst NUT members than amongst members of Voice.

Turning to the analysis involving professional commitment, the results were very similar. The unconstrained model again provided quite a good fit ($\chi^2 = 2492.711$; $df = 684$; $CFI = 0.916$; $RMSEA = 0.042$, again superior to the constrained model (change in $\chi^2 = 22.433$; change in $df = 8$; $p < 0.01$). The path coefficients for the unconstrained model appear in figure 2. The basic findings were similar to the analysis for organizational commitment, with just one exception: for professional commitment the path to union commitment was significant (although only marginally). Once again, the path coefficient from pro-union beliefs to union commitment and from union commitment to UCB were significantly higher for the NUT sample.

Discussion

In this paper, we have focused on a comparison between the Voice and the NUT, commonly perceived as the most “moderate and “militant” teacher unions respectively. Our comparison of member attitudes across the two unions revealed that union commitment and perceived union instrumentality were not significantly

different, the latter suggesting that the two unions were not viewed fundamentally differently by their members in terms of effectiveness. However, other attitudes did differ significantly, with Voice members generally higher in job satisfaction and both organizational and professional commitment, and with NUT members higher in union citizenship behaviour and general pro-union attitudes. From our review, the image of Voice is one of “moderation”, one almost of reluctant unionism, and the member attitudes found in our study, of relatively high job satisfaction and organizational and professional commitment, are consistent with this. It is notable that Voice members expressed higher levels of commitment to the teaching profession, consistent with the union’s claim to be both a trade union **and** a professional association for teachers. Furthermore, especially in respondents’ open-ended comments, there was a suggestion that Voice members joined more for insurance reasons rather than to get effective collective representation. In contrast, our review of the NUT characterizes it as the more unionate and “militant” organization, and again our findings on member attitudes are consistent with this, with NUT members having more strongly pro-union attitudes in general and being more prone to participate actively in their union. Again, respondents’ open-ended comments were consistent with this, with NUT members focusing on issues of collective representation.

Bamberger et al. (1999) suggested that the nature of the membership may influence the antecedents of union commitment and participation. We evaluated this by replicating their model for the two groups of members. Our findings suggest that for both Voice and NUT members, job satisfaction positively predicted organizational commitment, but in neither case was the direct path from job satisfaction to union commitment significant. Again for both samples, union instrumentality positively predicted both union commitment and pro-union attitudes, and the latter also had a

positive effect on union commitment. Both union instrumentality (often seen as a reflection of individualistic business unionism, focusing on what the union delivers to individual members) and pro-union attitudes (often seen as an indicator of a more collective or even solidaristic orientation to the union) were significantly associated with union commitment, suggesting that both individualistic and collective orientations to union are important. As expected, union commitment positively predicted UCB. When professional commitment was substituted for organizational commitment in the analysis, the findings were essentially unchanged, except that professional commitment predicted union commitment for the Voice sample only, perhaps reflecting its dual nature as a union and professional association.

In spite of these similarities in findings, there were some significant differences in the magnitude of effects across the two samples. In the NUT sample, pro-union beliefs had a significantly stronger effect on union commitment, and union commitment had a stronger impact on UCB. These findings were the same in both the organizational and professional commitment analyses. They suggest that pro-union beliefs were more salient amongst NUT members in motivating union commitment, and that union commitment was more likely to translate into active participation amongst NUT members than amongst members of Voice. Again, these findings are in line with the image of the NUT as the more “militant” and unionate organization. Overall, these findings are consistent with Bamberger et al.’s (1999) suggestion that the nature of the membership is likely to moderate the relationships in the model, and in particular may influence the relative importance of pro-union attitudes.

Our finding of no significant direct path from job satisfaction to union commitment differs from the significant negative relationship in the Bamberger et al. (1999) meta-analysis. However, our finding is compatible with some studies (Chan et

al, 2006; Tan and Aryee, 2002), and it seems likely that this path is influenced by contextual factors such as industrial relations climate (Tan and Aryee, 2002; Fuller and Hester, 1998). The path did not differ significantly across the two unions, suggesting that union did not moderate the relationship. Also, unlike previous studies (e.g., Bamberger et al, 1999; Tan and Aryee, 1999), we found no significant positive path from organizational to union commitment, suggesting that dual organizational-union loyalty may be less salient in teaching than in some other occupations, perhaps as teachers identify more with their occupation as a teacher rather than as an employee of a particular school.

Our findings carry implications for debates on union strategy, in particular in relation to the debate on the gains to be made for unions from militant or moderate orientations. We know rather more about militant union orientations compared to moderate ones as UK researchers appear to have been much more attracted to study militant union contexts (e.g. Gall, 2003; Darlington, 2001). Relatively very few studies have directly compared members' attitudes in "militant" and "moderate" unions. Beaumont and Elliot's (1989) study of employee choice of unions in nursing, and Bacon and Blyton's (2002) study of ISTC and TGWU attitudinal militancy and moderation in the steel industry are the main exceptions in the UK. Discussions of "moderation" and "militancy" as union strategies have tended to focus on the relative viability of these, as alternative ways forward for the union movement (e.g., Kelly, 1996). However, our findings demonstrate that, at least in teaching, both may be viable in a given sector, since they may address members and potential members with different preferences, on the one hand for a union emphasizing "professionalism" and eschewing strike action under any circumstances, and on the other for an effective defender of teachers' rights, willing to give strong voice to members' concerns on

educational policy and terms and conditions. Whether this also holds true in other sectors is an area for further research, but similar competitive multi-unionism exists in other parts of the public sector (e.g., the civil service , local government, and the health service), and perhaps also in the private sector (Dobson, 1997), suggesting that union differentiation along these lines may be a more general phenomenon.

Our study also has implications for the multi-unionism debate. Multi-unionism, defined as when employees at a particular workplace are represented by more than one union for the purposes of collective bargaining, is a declining but distinctive feature of the British industrial relations landscape (Van Wanrooy et al, 2013; Cully et al, 1999). Aside from the fact that it may provide employees with a choice of union representation, the continuing prevalence of multi-unionism has raised concerns. From a union perspective, multi-unionism is seen as fragmenting union resources, increasing competition between unions, and undermining union effectiveness (Dobson, 1997). From an employers' perspective, multi-unionism complicates collective bargaining processes and is associated with increased strike rates, reduced business efficiency and productivity (Blanchflower and Cubbin, 1986; Ingram et al, 1993).

The concern of the Donovan Commission was that multi-unionism would result in more strikes due to demarcation, jurisdictional, and poaching/raiding disputes (Royal Commission, 1968). Also, there was a fear that unions would seek to be seen as more militant than their rivals in order to attract and retain members. However, post-Donovan, unions may have competed more on the basis of competitive moderation (Basset, 1986), with union “beauty parades”, whereby employers select unions for recognition on the basis of their moderate orientation and potential for cooperative partnership. Some unions with no strike pledges, such as the Royal

College of Nursing and the Professional Association of Teachers/Voice have generally bucked the trend of union decline in the UK with substantial and sustained membership growth (Kessler and Heron, 2001).

There are, of course, several limitations of our study that suggest areas for future research. First, our study is cross-sectional in design, so that whilst we have followed the traditional approach in the literature in assuming a causal link from “antecedents” to commitment and then to participation (Fullagar and Barling, 1989), we cannot rule out the possibility of reverse causation.

Also, there is a possibility of a dynamic interaction between the image of the union and member characteristics, for example with a militant image attracting and retaining members comfortable with militancy, which then reinforces the union’s militancy. Schneider’s (1987) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) theory provides an explanation here. ASA theory proposes that over time forces within organizations operate to attract, select, and retain an increasingly homogenous group of members. In the case of unions, the attraction and attrition elements are the key ones with members attracted to unions to the extent that their personal characteristics are suited to the union’s image and culture. Having personal characteristics that are not suited to the union may in some cases result in gaining membership, but such members are expected to be more inclined to leave the union. As a result of ASA a union’s membership evolves towards a state of interpersonal homogeneity along certain individual differences dimensions such as conservatism and attitudes towards militancy which in turn, influence union processes and policies.

Second, it should be recognised that, in common with most of the research on union commitment and participation (e.g., Fullagar and Barling, 1989; Bamberger et al., 1999; Aryee and Chay, 2002), our study is conceptualized at the individual level

of analysis, analyzing individual attitudes as antecedents of individual workers' commitment and participation. However, given that union participation is usually characterized as a form of collective action, there is a case for considering collective factors within such models. Studies are now incorporating such factors as group solidarity and workplace industrial relations climate within these kinds of models (Martinez et al, 2011; Snape and Redman, 2012). A recent study of NUT (and Unison) members of UCB found that it is meaningful to think of union-focused UCB (i.e. behaviours targeted at helping the union) as a collective i.e. group level phenomenon (Snape, Redman and Gould-Williams, 2014). The study also found that collective group-level union focused UCB had a significant positive association with individual-level union focused UCB. The relationship between individual and collective UCB seems to us to be a fruitful area where additional research is needed.

Third, we have addressed union image as a moderator of the relationships in the commitment-participation model. Future studies could valuably look at other possible moderators (Bamberger et al., 1999). For example, one potentially interesting line of research would be to examine how demographic dissimilarity of workgroups impacts on union commitment/UCB models, for example gender, age, race, union status, and contract type (part-time, full-time, supply) differences. Unit-level demography is a compositional property of work groups and work units that describes the pattern of unit members' demographic characteristics at an aggregate level (Joshi, Liao and Roh, 2011). Researchers have paid considerable attention to the impact of demographic dissimilarity of work groups on organization-related variables such as organizational commitment but only a few studies have examined its impact on union variables and the findings are rather mixed (Bacharach and Bamberger, 2004; Iverson and Buttigieg, 1997). Some of the considerable differences in demographics

in teaching, for example differences in the part-time/full-time composition between unions in this study, with 11 percent in the NUT and 30 percent in Voice\Pat working part-time, suggests that dissimilarly models could provide interesting insights. We could not examine demographic dissimilarity relationships in this study as we were unable to locate individuals within their schools to test group effects.

Conclusions

In this paper we tested the Bamberger et al. (1999) proposition that the nature of the membership may influence the antecedents of union commitment and UCB. We examined this proposition by replicating their model, and one in which we replaced organizational commitment by professional commitment, for two groups of union members in moderate and militant teaching unions in England. In both the models tested pro-union beliefs in the NUT sample had a significantly stronger effect on union commitment, and union commitment had a stronger effect on UCB. This supports the Bamberger et al (1999) proposition that the nature of the membership matters in union commitment and UCB models.

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Table 1
Means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities

	Voice		NUT		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Mean	Std. devn.	Mean	Std. devn.									
1. UCB - Activist	1.12 [†]	.38	1.60	.71	.76/.66	.30***	.38***	.29***	.12*	.30***	-.24***	-.36***	-.14**
2. UCB – Rank & file	3.13 [†]	1.02	3.28	.98	.26***	.69/.70	.44***	.43***	.27***	.35***	-.17**	-.12*	-.05
3. UCB - Individual	1.99 [†]	1.09	2.16	1.08	.33***	.42***	.83/.85	.27***	.14**	.30***	-.15**	-.13**	-.05
4. Union commitment	4.50	.97	4.53	1.09	.23***	.53***	.37***	.76/.80	.49***	.51***	-.03	-.03	.03
5. Union instrumentality	4.33	.89	4.35	.97	.10**	.30***	.23***	.48***	.92/.93	.36**	.06	.08	.09
6. Pro-union attitudes	4.91 [†]	.96	5.64	.93	.13***	.34***	.25***	.49***	.40***	.84/.79	-.08	-.07	-.02
7. Job satisfaction	5.52 [†]	1.27	4.72	1.58	-.02	.04	.00	.09**	.10**	.08**	.86/.88	.70***	.69***
8. Organisational commitment	5.22 [†]	1.19	4.58	1.36	-.06*	.01	-.02	.10**	.11***	.07*	.63***	.75/.78	.49***
9. Professional commitment	5.85 [†]	.99	5.28	1.28	-.06	.08**	.08*	.18***	.16***	.18***	.67***	.48***	.81/.83

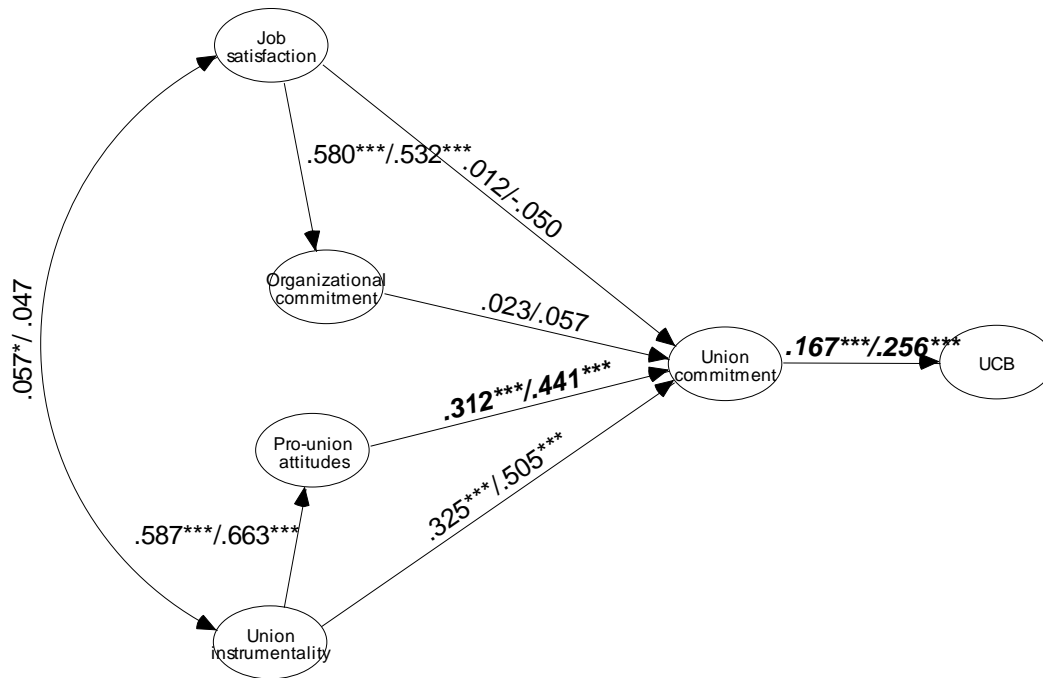
Note. Correlations for Voice below the diagonal, for NUT above the diagonal. Reliability coefficients are shown on the diagonal (Voice/NUT).
2-tailed tests. Voice $N=1086$; NUT $N=386$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

[†] Shows that the Voice and NUT means are significantly different (.05 level of significance or better, on an independent samples t-test).

Figure 1.

Antecedents of union commitment and citizenship behaviour: with organizational commitment.

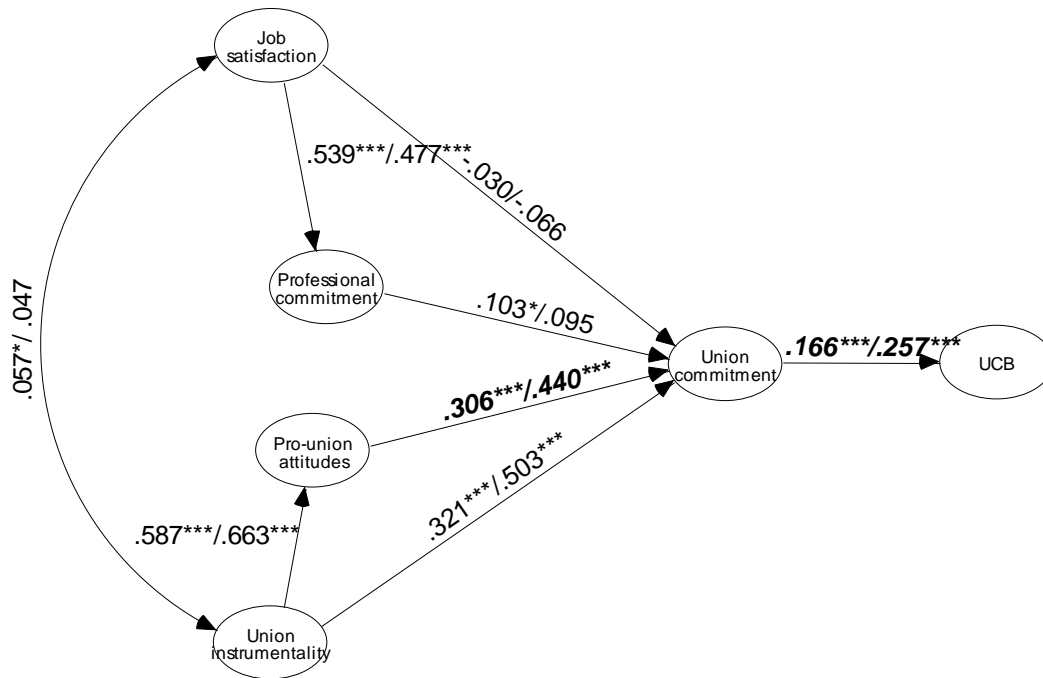


Note. Voice $N=1086$; NUT $N=386$. Unstandardized coefficients. Coefficients on the left/right are for the Voice sample. Pairs of coefficients in bold italic script are significantly different from each other ($p < .05$).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 2.

Antecedents of union commitment and citizenship behaviour: with professional commitment.



Note. Voice $N=1086$; NUT $N=386$. Unstandardized coefficients. Coefficients on the left/right are for the Voice sample. Pairs of coefficients in bold italic script are significantly different from each other ($p < .05$).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.